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metic book for an old man called Samuel who produced a series of sweet books on various subjects, beautifully tabulated books with questions and answers, invaluable for examinations and used even in my day when we and our school teachers whisked them out of sight of Education Inspectors who came on the prowl for just such unprogressive methods of education. He also went across to the American Mission School where quite often the teachers were more Christian and painstaking than brilliant, to help old Teacher Nellie with Geometry riders, and in this way he met my mother.

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My parents could not get married as soon as they left school. My father had first to go to the University, which consisted then of Rangoon College, affiliated to Calcutta University, and then he felt he must work to buy my grandmother a big enough plot of paddy land so that her two youngest sons would not need to look after her in Ye, but could come into the world like my father. He now felt that they should not be denied the wonderful opportunities which he had found. My father did go to College, but had passed only his F. A. (corresponding to Intermediate) when he heard that my mother was now going out to teach in a school at Thaton, and that she was having to put on a European gown and hat in order to be less conspicuous, because at that time no Burmese Buddhist ladies went out to work. My father left his studies at once and got a job in the same school to look after her, and it was only after some months of persuasion by Grandfather and my mother that he consented to leave and look for a better paid position.

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He managed to obtain a myookship in the Government Service, which is a junior administrative post but considered a very good job for Burmans in those days. In this job he could save enough to buy Grandmother her paddy land, after which he and my mother would get married. But my father with his good looks, his tectotaller habits, and his myookship, was considered a desirable son-in-law by many people, and other parents were not like Grandfather; they would try to engage the young man's affections for their daughters. I am sure my mother spent the next three years in some anxiety, as she heard stories of the young myook's gay and happy life in such far-off towns as Toungoo and Shwegyin. But one day the children dashed up to her with a telegram; she opened it and read *Gyi will you marry me*. My mother, who has never shown any excitement as far as I can remember, got up very quietly and went to her chest of drawers. She took out ten annas in change, and wired back Yes.

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Soon after this my father arrived amidst great excitement on the part of my mother's family and a pretence of complete ignorance on Grandfather's part. My aunts expected an explosion from him when

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my father went in to ask his permission to marry his most beloved daughter, because Grandfather liked tradition in all things, and traditionally my father's parents or other elders should have approached him first, but there was no explosion; the fierce old man said: "Maung Chit Khaing is a good man."

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dependents in whose company we spent most of our childhood. Min-⁵⁹²
 kadaws divide their servants into "downstairs servants" and "upstairs
 servants". The downstairs variety are the usual domestics—cook, boy, ³⁵⁷
 gardener, office boy and so on. The upstairs variety are not referred
 to as "servants" (*a-say-khan*); they are girls whose work is all done in
 the rooms upstairs, who sleep there and spend the greatest part of their
 day in the quarters inhabited by the family. In many cases this system
 is one of abuse and oppression. The girls may be poor relatives—cousins
 in the fourth degree perhaps—or they may be bought up from poor
 parents who, for a sum of Rs. 25 to Rs. 100 down and intermittent gra-
 tuities, will allow their children to go into a theoretically better home.
 These girls come at any age from seven to fourteen years. They are
 clothed and fed and their *mon-bo* (sweetmeat money) depends entirely
 on the mistress they chance upon. When they are young they play
 with the children of the house and when older they sweep and dust the
 upstairs rooms—rooms on which we walk only barefoot as distinct from
 the downstairs rooms swept by an Indian sweeper, and on which they use
 a feather broom instead of wielding a broom of coconut sticks, thus sealing
 the distinction; they also wash the personal garments of the household,
 look after the children and all other housemaid duties. They are rarely
 kept alone; there may be up to four or five according to the household.
 The relationship with the family is that of feudal serf or poor relation. ^[601]
 They do not call their employers *thakin* and *thakinma* (master and
 mistress); they address them as Aunt and Uncle—older-than-own-parents;
 they call the children of the family elder-brother or sister-so-and-so and
 address all relatives as the children do, but they have no definite salary,
 no rights and no external connections. It is only in rare cases, however, ^[834] ●
 that girls reach the age of thirty in an environment not congenial to
 them; in ideal circumstances it is the duty of the mistress to settle them
 in an advantageous marriage by the time they are twenty-one or twenty-
 two. Failing this, the girls generally manage to elope, for elopements ^[883]
 are frequent and not very scandalous in Burma.

In our childhood, when the family was big with growing children,
 we had five girls with us at one time. Of these, three were our relatives
 —two sisters, Ma Ohn Kyi and Ma Mya Shwe, who were third cousins of
 my father, and Ma Ngwe Yin, a second cousin of my mother. Both
 their families were far too poor to keep them. We had to pay respect
 to Ma Ohn Kyi and Ma Ngwe Yin who were both a few years older than
 me and called us all by our name, but nobody stopped us from bullying
 the young Mya Shwe and the two unrelated girls as much as we liked.
 A-Kyi, as we called Ma Ohn Kyi, was always treated as the senior one
 because my parents considered that she had a good moral character.

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592 She was fairly pretty, very quiet and reserved towards us, and enjoyed
357 helping my mother with the babies, supervising the work of the servant girls and valeting my father. Ngwe Yin, who came to us as a very attractive girl with a reputation for being unmanageable even at a young age, always chose the task of taking us for walks in the evenings so that she could put on her nice clothes. She took us wherever she liked, or she sat with us at meal times and let us be as naughty as we wanted while she indulged in repartee with my father's clerks or chauffeur. Mya Shwe was my contemporary and playmate; she went to school while I was in boarding school but cut short her attendances the day I came home, irrespective of differences in our school calendars.

357 When A-Kyi was about nineteen it was announced to us that she
• 584 was to be married to my father's clerk, Maung Hla Bu. This young man was a favourite of my parents and had been a constant admirer of A-Kyi, helping her to make the beds when my father took the whole family on tours, but awaiting the graciousness of my parents before he dared to ask for her in marriage. My mother gave A-Kyi a small trousseau and a few pieces of jewellery, and they were married shortly before my father got a posting to another station. When a child was born, Mya Shwe, who had outgrown her days as a playmate for me, went to stay with them. Ngwe Yin, the beautiful girl, continued discontentedly for about a year, and then she eloped with a student protégé of my father's. I don't think either of my parents were very shocked at this.

357 My memories of the girls who worked for us are happy enough only
565 because my mother had been brought up in Grandfather's house where everyone was taught to do things for herself; in her character also was a pervading sense of tolerance. In some minkadaws' houses, however, I have seen two girls kneeling with soap and towel outstretched, while the mistress bathed herself. In more cheerful but no less aristocratic-minded households a meal laid ready on the table is the signal for one girl to get under the table and fan the mosquitoes off the legs of the family, and another to play the gramophone right through the meal. My gay young uncle San Lin extended the domestic duties of his girls to the learning of modern songs which he liked, and he did his morning dressing to the accompaniment of his servant girls with powder on their faces and jasmine buds in their hair, swinging their feather brooms to the rhythm of modern love songs.

592 A-Kyi and A-Shwe and all the girls we had before and after them
431 bring back memories of the household articles which made with them a
513 background never recovered in our later Rangoon days. My mother,
286 like all minkadaws in the districts, did not depend on a big bazaar and
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never talked about the business of their past working days when they met. Sometimes they showed a fleeting interest in news of the postings of friends still in service, but even the official matters of Thaton district itself did not enter into their discussions. They talked of charity donations, of the respective monasteries which they endowed and attended, and of formulæ of *eggaya-hto*, alchemy, or the search for the philosopher's stone which will turn all metals to gold. Most Burmans get interested in *eggaya-hto* during their later years, even if few now practise it. 887
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This alchemy, which has no place among the true teachings of Buddhism, has to be done under auspicious astrological influences and is usually carried on in secret. Burman Buddhists condemn the use of it when it is carried on for *lawba*, greed for riches, but others justify the process as a means of concentrating the mental faculties. The common stories tell of hermits in the forests, who by their ascetic life and concentrated meditation have more powers over the forces of nature, as being well versed in the processes of alchemy. When such a hermit achieves the extreme concentration of mind on his task he is successful—the philosopher's stone is discovered, the body of the hermit then disappears in the dissolving of matter, and his spirit is free to live unhampered by the body, till the arrival of the next Buddha on the earth. Most Burmese women, however, although they believe that this happens in the case of hermits, object very strongly to the practice of alchemy on the part of their menfolk, owing to the money and energy that is wasted on seeking out new and expensive formulæ once the craze has got hold of a man. All experiments are started with mercury which is melted with other minerals, animal or vegetable substances which derive their magical properties partly from their inaccessibility, partly from being treated with prescribed rites. My father had no intention of taking up alchemy and impoverishing us, but he too was very interested to hear of the success and failure of various methods. These discussions must have been kept well anchored to reality by the other chief topic of discussion—the families of the pensioners. 822
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The five duties of a parent towards his children include the settling of the child in a good marriage. By the time the *a-so-ya* mins retire, their sons and daughters have reached a marriageable age. The sons are in the process of winning a good position in one of the government services and their daughters have been dressed with an adequate amount of jewellery. The marriage market, which had no existence in former Burmese society and which still is unheard of in Ye, and among the poorer people, is now a very concrete institution among the educated and modern classes. The rise of the *minkadaw* class and of higher paid Class I government officials has been mainly responsible for this. More 593
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593 and more within recent years, the higher government services have come
 • 584 to be associated not only with "face", but with *gon*, prestige, and *ausa*,
 554 authority, which together make up a *myet-hna-gyi*, big face, in Burma.
 177 Mothers of daughters want their daughters to have *gon* and *ausa* and be
 58 big of face as the wife of the senior government officer in a town, and
 565 mothers of sons want to get the most for themselves and their other
 children out of having such a golden goose. They want a girl with
 wealth, a meek nature, good looks, religious piety and education, more or
 less in this order. So that the imperfect daughter-in-law may lack the
 last named qualities rather than the first. Wealth means not merely
 money, property or jewels, but an absence of younger brothers and
 sisters or other potential dependents, this being a very important factor
 in our closely-knit family system. A relative of mine who had just seen
 his son enter a top service, showed my father his comprehensive table
 of the marriageable girls of Burma, under headings of family connec-
 tions, amount and form of property, potential dependents, physical and
 moral qualities of the girl. My father should have been keenly interested
 as the father of a son who was studying in England with success, and,
 indeed, when my brother returned, he might have fetched us about
 Rs. 30,000 had he desired, so far have we progressed beyond the Burmese
 traditions of the man's family asking for the hand of the girl with presents
 of money and jewellery.

It may be asked, what of the men who are thus bartered? Bur-
 mans are very greatly attached to their mothers; few can resist a mother's
 tears, and the tears in these cases are genuinely of grief, because the
 mother sees this marriage as a faithful discharge of one of her five
 duties. The five duties of a child towards its parent, on the other hand,
 include the support of father and mother, and in making this marriage
 the man sees the best way of providing comfort to his parents in their
 old age. For the girls also, an arranged marriage is not necessarily a
 joyless thing. Girls who are educated as we have been, in spite of reading
 Western romances, are brought up to believe that a girl will grow to love
 her husband who is good to her. *Tha-na*, pity, compassion, and *chit*,
 affection-love, are very close in Burmese; the usual way for a wife to
 address her husband is *Maung*, the same word as younger brother, or
Ko Ko, elder brother; some husbands address their wives as *nyi-ma-lay*,
 little sister. And, in fact, in most cases the results do bear out the wis-
 dom of this attitude towards marriage; so that to most Burmans it is the
 "free" Western marriages which so often appear ill-assorted and lead
 to divorces. Still, it cannot be denied that much undignified haggling
 and manoeuvring go on nowadays, in the efforts to obtain the best
 match for sons and daughters. *Aung-thuets*, go-betweens, get a lot of

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face from bringing something off, money is paid in advance, rush tactics are employed to prevent the man returning from abroad from marrying the sweetheart of his college days, and in some cases even magic is resorted to, though in secret. This black magic, especially, involves some very undignified actions. A younger cousin of mine once warned his mother: "Please, Mother, never try to sell me like a bullock, or worse still to arrange a marriage for my sister. I will not help you to jump thrice on eggshells or throw ten viss of fish into a well at dead of night under instructions from a soothsayer."

Although marriages were constantly being arranged among our circle of friends in Thaton, I was not allowed to attend weddings as a young unmarried girl. What we did attend regularly with the grown-ups were the *u-bok-nay*, the duty day gatherings every week in the resthouses among the hills. On these days Buddhists who choose to observe the day, obey eight or ten precepts instead of five. Amongst these ten are the abstaining from food after mid-day, absence of ornament and cosmetics in dress, meditation and prayer, and absence of a high couch in sleep. In Thaton the observance of this day was made the weekly social event with the same combination of material enjoyment and religious piety that characterizes all Burmese functions as described previously. Each family went to the hills early in the morning with mats, betel boxes and a well-cooked meal. The girls wore all the jewellery they had because we had not yet taken the precepts, and this was a good chance of showing that a family did not lack wealth. We met in the resthouses, to one of which a monk came to intone the precepts. These we repeated in chorus after him; then the elders talked and chewed betel, and at about 10-30 the whole party went to bathe in the pools made by the waterfalls down the hills. We went back to find the pooled dishes of four or five families laid out in a rich feast. We stuffed ourselves with this. The law states that food should not be eaten after noon, and the law was always obeyed in the letter if not in the spirit.

One maiden lady in Rangoon who kept duty days regularly ate till as near noon as she possibly could. She usually finished her meal with fruit, and if she was eating a banana when noon struck with a loud bang from the cannon at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, "Haw!" she would exclaim, and in would go the whole length of the banana into her mouth. After noon, tea and coffee are not allowed either but aerated waters, which look so much like water, are sanctioned. When my husband was a novice monk in the monastery, they were allowed medicinal products also after noon, and the hungry young novices often made a delicious soup of garlic (a digestive) fried in butter (medicinal component), and water poured on to the fragrant compound.

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running with unholy energy and two small boys streaking after them 525
shouting: "My hpongyi! Hey, my hpongyi!"

The showy vanity of Rangoon was seen at its greatest at wedding 585
celebrations where no woman of any standing came without a full load 511
of jewellery, either owned or borrowed for the occasion. For weddings of
families like ours hundreds of invitations had always to be sent out owing
to the tradition of acknowledging distant relationships and connections.
It would be considered rude also not to invite the friends among clerks
and traders from every town in which my father had been posted during
our growing-up years.

Marriage is a social contract in Burma. To be married one needs 581
no recourse to legal or priestly officers. The *let-htat*, laying of hands 562
one on the other, can be performed in the presence of elders, or a feast can 428
be given to a few people to obtain recognition of the married state. This
is done after elopements, for example, when the parents have become re-
conciled and the young couple is too shy to go through the pantomime of
a marriage ceremony. For divorce, also, no legal procedure is necessary,
but convention makes divorces rare. Although monogamy is almost
universal in Burma, polygamy is not forbidden by the law. A "mistress"
of a married man is considered a sort of wife, but the disapproval with
which this is regarded is shown in the term applied to her: *ma-ya-nga*,
lesser wife. But the liberty operates both ways, and in the rare cases of a
woman who runs to a second husband without any agreement having been
reached beforehand, she is said to have a *lin-ngè*, lesser husband. The
lack of legal safeguards of a woman's position as the only wife is amply
compensated for by the rulings of Burmese Buddhist Law as regards her
property. She retains sole ownership of whatever property she brings to
the marriage, and on the dissolution of the marriage is entitled to half of
all the additions of wealth since the marriage. Neither can an irate
husband make a will leaving his money to other relatives and strangers.
Wills are forbidden by law; children inherit equal shares of the parents'
legacy, except in the cases where there are more than four children in
the family. Then the eldest takes one-quarter before the rest is divided
equally amongst the other children. On the death of one parent the
surviving parent still has sole ownership of half the property. The other
half is open to division among the children, but it is only a black sheep
which will insist on division while one parent is still alive.

When I had been home but a month, my brother appealed to me 584*
for help in arranging the matter of his marriage. His difficulty was that
he had no wish to marry the various dowried young women with whom
my relatives were trying to contract him; he had chosen his own bride
but at the same time the stern array of cousins, aunts and uncles in our

• 584 family made it necessary to arrange things in a traditional manner. My brother had chosen his bride from a family of sisters who had been to school with us and with whom we were on the friendliest terms, so that he could have pressed his own suit if he wished, but since my sister-in-law's family also stood for tradition, we had to go through elaborate negotiations.

For a go-between we chose a lady who belonged to high circles of Rangoon society and who was known to be a great friend of the girl's family. One morning my mother and I paid her a formal call and made the proposal, my mother reciting the list of her son's qualifications which the lady already knew quite well. She promised to approach the guardian aunt of the girl's family. Shortly after this, we called on the aunt, who demurred, not to seem eager, and said, moreover, that she could not give an answer until she had consulted an astrologer to see whether the stars of the young man and woman formed an auspicious union. We thereupon gave her the date and hour of my brother's birth. During all this time, no word had passed between my future sister-in-law and us upon the matter; we did not, in fact, visit her. In due course, the aunt gave her answer, and while my brother was out of town on a tour, a party was held at the girl's house, with the senior relatives of both sides present to formalize the engagement. No unmarried young girls should attend this, out of modesty, and although I went along as my mother's right-hand, I had to closet myself in the bedroom with the girls. It was only then, when the elders were formalizing the engagement, that my sister-in-law did not feel it forward to talk about the wedding and future happiness with much excitement. After the engagement had been announced, my brother was allowed to call every day during the three months of their engagement, but they were not allowed to be seen together in public.

177. Meanwhile, great preparations went on, for besides the social arrangements attendant on all weddings, the attire of the bride and bridegroom had to be matched in colour, a panegyric writer had to be found to write the poem of praise, and suitable elders to perform the ceremony had to be agreed upon. The modern Burmese custom is to ask the most respected highly placed Burmese couple among the family's friends, along with an equally respected English official to pronounce recognition in English. (This learning of English by a vast number of Burmans, and their daily activities in that language, have led to much duplication of effort in the disposal of their spirits also. When a person is buried, a notice is served on his spirit that this body is now to be vacated, and the spirit to go elsewhere for fear that the faithful spirit hovering round the grave may create a ta-say, a ghost. When a student died in term time at the University, the rites at her funeral were completed only when a

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CHAPTER VII

MARRIAGE

538 IN the Lawkanidi, the book of proverbs relating to
581 ordinary life, it is said that monks and hermits are beautiful
when they are lean; four-footed animals when they are fat;
men when they are learned; and women when they are
562 married. This recommendation to the married state is no
428 more needed by Burmese maidens than it is by their sisters
421 in other parts of the world, and they have the further induce-
ment that they enjoy a much freer and happier position
than in any other Eastern country, and in some respects
are better off even than women in England. All the money
and possessions which a girl brings with her on marriage are
kept carefully separate for the benefit of her children or
heirs, and she carries her property away with her if she is
divorced, besides anything she may have added to it in the
interim by her own trading or by inheritance. Thus a
married Burmese woman is much more independent than
any European even in the most advanced states. In the
562 eyes of the Dammathat the old idea of the *patria potestas*
584 prevails indeed, and woman is regarded as a simple chattel,
belonging entirely to her parents, and to be disposed of by
them without any reference to her personal inclinations;
but, as a matter of fact, she may do pretty well as she
pleases, may marry the youth on whom she has fixed her
affections, and may separate herself from the husband who
has offended her, by going before the village elders and
stating her case; and if the complaint is just, her request
is never refused.

As yet they have not begun to demand an equal share

According to the laws of Menu there are three ways in which a marriage can be brought about:—

1. When the parents of the couple give them to one another.
2. When they come together through the good offices of a go-between, called an *aungthwè*.
3. When they arrange the matter between themselves.

It is understood, of course, that the two latter forms require at least the passive consent of the father, or, if he is dead, of the guardian, mother, brother, sister, uncle, or whoever it may be; every woman—every young woman at any rate—being necessarily under the protection of somebody. The *Dammathat* says: "Let the man to whom she is given by her nearest relation be her husband. If the parents or the relations of the girl do not give her away, and she is carried off against their will, even if she has had ten children, they have power to cause her to separate from the man and give her to another; the man has no right to say that she is his wife. Why is this? Because a daughter belongs to her parents?" But, on the other hand, "If a young woman runs off with a young man not approved by her parents, and, having concealed herself for some time, shall return to the village or neighbourhood in which her parents live, and have two or three children, or live there five or ten years with the man after her parents have seen and known of her being there, they shall not have power to cause her to separate from her husband."

According to the old system, the young man was not considered of age to marry till he was twenty-four or twenty-five. The age of the girl was always a matter of no consequence as long as she had attained to puberty. When a youth wanted to marry he told his parents, and they went to the father and mother of the young woman of his choice. If these had no objections, then the young man kept company with the girl, had the run of the house for two or three years, so that they might get to know one another well, and then, if they were still of one mind, the question of dowry was settled, a fortunate day and hour fixed upon, and the marriage carried out. Nowadays such formalities are almost

entirely dispensed with. If the parents of both houses are agreeable, the contracting parties get married with most ardent lover-like rapidity. The age, too, has become very much younger. Most lads get married when they are eighteen or nineteen; thirteen or fourteen is a common age for the girls. Runaway marriages are common enough, and though the parents may be angry, they are usually too easy-going and indolent to take any energetic action in the matter, and let the couple find out their mistake and come and ask for pardon and a house to live in, which is seldom refused. Occasionally in Lower Burma a stern father demands that they shall be separated until the lad has got a situation for himself, but this is ordinarily little more than a mere form of speech. In Upper Burma, where food is scarce and working hands more valuable, the husband is brought to the girl's parents' house and made to do his share towards supporting the household.

The preliminary courting is naturally conducted in the old fashion, best known to those who have had experience of their own in such matters. The parties meet at pwès, the girl perhaps selling cheroots, fried garlic, le'pet, and what not, and therefore being readily accessible to any swain. It must not be supposed that keeping a stall is regarded as anything derogatory. Numbers of perfectly well-to-do women set them up regularly; some even have daily work in the bazaars, and very often a girl commences occupations of the kind with the view of attracting the young men and securing a husband. Then there are meetings at pagoda feasts, in the zayats and at friends' houses, so that there are plenty of chances of introduction to eligible swains, even without calling in the assistance of the aungthwè. This functionary makes it a regular occupation to know all the attractions, physical and sordid, of all the young women in the place, and for a small consideration, or sometimes merely for love of his trade, brings young couples together and arranges places of meeting for them. He is, of course, most useful where an impecunious youth aspires to the hand of a rich merchant's or high official's daughter. He manages an introduction in a roundabout way to avoid raising suspicions, praises his client's appearance and

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abilities, contrives a series of unexpected meetings, and does everything, in fact, to further the project. There are regular practitioners in the business, and others who dabble in it for want of something to do and from sheer love of scheming.

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Courting, whether authorised by the parents or not, is very seldom carried on in daylight. So much is this the case that the phrase *Lu-byo hlè thi achein*, "Courting time," is commonly used in ordinary conversation to designate nine o'clock at night, or a little before or after. The time may be due to the fact that occupation, or the heat, prevent it during the day, but there is an old saw which may account for it, to the effect that in the morning women are cross and peevish; in the middle of the day they are testy and quarrelsome; but at night they are sweet and amiable. Authorised courtship, if the term is not too unromantic, is always carried on at this time, and preparations for it are duly made by the girls. A couple of hours after nightfall the lover, with a friend or two, makes his appearance near the house and dawdles up and down till he finds the old people have gone to bed, or retired from the scene. Then he goes up the steps along with his supporters and finds the girl alone, or with a companion or two, dressed in her best, with flowers in her hair, powder on her cheeks and neck, and generally prepared for conquest. The old people are never present, though they can hear everything, and the mother, as I am credibly informed, *pauk-kyi thi*, has a convenient chink in the bamboo walls through which she can survey operations and prevent too ardent love-making. Interviews vary in length, and the nature of the conversation may be best left to the imagination. If one of the accompanying young men has also an appointment that evening he naturally endeavours to curtail his friend's philandering as much as possible, in order that he himself may have the more time in another place to press his suit. Even in clandestine flirtations the courting is always effected in a formal way like this. Meetings in lover's loans, or *à quatre yeux*, would ruin a girl's character immediately. Her own mother would be the first to put the worst construction on such doings.

Little presents are exchanged. The *soupirant* brings a gay kerchief with some love-verses written on it, perhaps his own composition, more probably the erotic sighings of the prince in the last play he heard, or cribbed bodily from a song-book for Kālathas (Corinthians, lads of mettle). The girl gives him some green cheroots, rolled by her fair hands, or a brilliant woollen muffler which she has knitted; but there is never any of the kissing and caressing indulged in by more urgent foreign lovers. The girl would look upon any attempts of such a nature as highly indecorous, and no doubt it is quite unsuited to her clothing.

When at last everything has been settled—parents' consent obtained, dowry fixed, and a fortunate day and hour pitched upon—the marriage ceremony comes off in the house of the bride's parents. The ritual is very simple and has nothing whatever of a religious character about it; in fact the celibate pōngyis would be grossly scandalised if they were asked to take any part in it. A great feast is prepared at the expense of the bridegroom or his parents. All the relations, friends, and neighbours are invited, and it is the publicity of the thing that is really the main feature of the ceremony. The old custom that the bride and bridegroom should join their right hands together, palm to palm, in the presence of all the assembled guests, and then should eat rice out of the same dish and feed each other with one or two morsels in turtle-dove fashion, has in many cases died out, and the eating and drinking, the talk of the men in the main room of the house and of the women in the inner apartment, is quite enough to solemnise the union. When the newly-married couple retire into the bridal chamber it is sometimes in the larger towns the custom to shower saffron-coloured rice on them, but this, like the entire seclusion in which the happy pair are supposed to pass the next seven days, is very seldom actually carried out.

In the country villages, however, two ancient customs are still very generally prevalent. The one is to tie a string across the road along which the bridegroom must pass to the house of his intended. He comes in procession with all his friends, carrying the greater portion of the belongings

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14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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The orchestra plays as the initiates depart for the adjoining building to change into ordinary clothes, eat their last meal of the day, and bathe. Some guests now leave; borrowed articles, such as plates, cups and mats are gathered up for return to their owners, and eventually the orchestra departs.

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The initiates return to the front of the building in which the ceremony took place. They sit on mats for the shaving of their heads. Two women hold a long piece of white cloth before them to catch the hair as several men proceed to wet their heads and shave them clean with straight razors.

[302]

Once more the boys leave to bathe, then return and are seated before the chief monk. Their robes held in their hands before them, they recite prayers, give their robes to the monk, and ask him to dress them properly in the monkish garb.

Their robes donned, they squat before the monk and recite additional prayers, now following very carefully the special intonation appropriate to monks. The ceremony proper is complete.

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The following morning, early, a few relatives and close friends go to the monastery. The monks, including the novices, are offered food by them. A monk recites the Five-Fold Path, and then the ceremony of pouring water drop by drop is performed. Names are given the initiates -- special monastic names which they will bear only for the duration of their novitiate.

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In former times, and still today in the very remote villages of Burma, an initiate might spend many months, possibly several years, in the monkhood. Sometimes a boy would remain a monk for life. Today in Tadagale, as almost everywhere, initiates spend only a token period of about one week in the monkhood. During this time, they live the austere existence of the order, rising very early, spending long periods in prayer recitals, and abstaining from food after noon until the following morning. The short period of life as a novice is strongly in contrast with the easy-going, carefree childhood days that precede it. Some boys approach the time of their shinbyu with feelings of trepidation, and all are glad when the period spent in the monastery is over and they can return to the much less stern discipline of their parents.

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Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the village find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality, in the company of others at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others, people assume that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as 'getting married.' Villagers find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis; such behavior is regarded as contrary to nature. But however much it occurs, unchaperoned association is not approved, much less encouraged.

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Once a pair have decided they want to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, in a relatively small village such as Tadagale, something of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl, they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. Sometimes the approach to the girl's family is made directly; in other instances a female go-between will be employed. The latter is more likely when the girl's family

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14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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is not particularly well known to them. The boy's parents will be informed by the girl's family that their decision must await the outcome of consultation with an astrologer concerning the compatibility of the birth dates of the prospective bride and groom. If the marriage is found to be an auspicious one -- which it usually will be found to be if the girl's parents desire the match -- an affirmative answer is relayed to the boy's parents. The latter thereupon call on her parents, and in the presence of elders, formally ask for the girl's hand. From this moment the couple are considered betrothed and must not go about in public unchaperoned.

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The wedding date is astrologically determined. The length of the engagement depends upon the availability of an auspicious wedding date. In general, lengthy engagements are disliked. In no case should an engagement carry over the period of Waso, the so-called Buddhist 'Lent.'

Before the wedding ceremony, the bride's house is open to friends and relatives, who are expected to drop in to help prepare the house for the wedding, lending household items that may be needed for the occasion. A pavilion adjoining the house is erected to accommodate the crowd that will attend. All the helpers and would-be helpers in this work are offered meals and light refreshments.

The bride's family normally bears all the expenses of these preparations, but sometimes the boy's family will mention a sum of money either as a contribution towards the wedding or as an indication of their son's ability to support a wife. If such funds are offered, they will be mentioned at the time the girl's hand is sought.

One room in the girl's house is set aside as the bridal chamber. In families of average or better means it is furnished with a bed, draperies, and complete toilet and dressing facilities. In poorer families that cannot afford to furnish the bridal chamber in elaborate fashion, some show of style will be made in furnishing the bed, at least. By the evening before the wedding day the room must be ready, with all the wedding gifts on display.

On the wedding day three or four intimate married friends of the girl dress her. This must not be done by widows or divorcees, for it would bode ill for the marriage. For unmarried girls to perform this task would be immodest. Neither should a pregnant woman take part in dressing the bride, for that would be bad for her baby. The dressing of the bride must begin sufficiently early so that she will be completely ready at a precise, astrologically determined wedding hour.

The bridegroom's party arrives just prior to the appointed time for the ceremony. It includes two of his bachelor friends as well as his family. He takes his seat on a cushion on the platform that has been specially erected. The bride is brought out by her matrons and approaches with eyes downcast. She takes her seat on a cushion to the bridegroom's left. Across the platform, from left to right, are placed three silver offering bowls. A fourth bowl, on the right hand edge of the platform, contains puffed rice. The bridegroom's bachelor friends take seats to his rear; the matrons of the bride sit directly behind her.

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A lay elder, arranged for by the bride's mother, officiates. He recites a psalm of praise concerning the merits of the bride and groom and the goodness

178 THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE CH.

522 that await those who do not know. They have their
157 dreams—who shall doubt it?—dreams of him who
shall love them, whom they shall love, who shall
make life one great glory to them; but their dreams
are dreams that can come true. They do not frame
to themselves ideals out of their own ignorance and
imagine these to be good, but they keep their eyes
wide open to the far more beautiful realities that are
around them every day. They know that a living
lover is greater, and truer, and better than any ideal
of a girl's dream. They live in a real world, and
they know it is good.

● 584 In time the lover comes. There is a delightful
custom all through Burma, an institution, in fact,
called 'courting-time.' It is from nine till ten
o'clock, more especially on moonlight nights, those
wonderful tropic nights, when the whole world lies
in a silver dream, when the little wandering airs that
touch your cheek like a caress are heavy with the
scent of flowers, and your heart comes into your
throat for the very beauty of life.

There is in front of every house a veranda, raised
perhaps three feet from the ground, and there the
girl will sit in the shadow of the eaves, sometimes
with a friend, but usually alone; and her suitors will
come and stand by the veranda, and talk softly in
little broken sentences, as lovers do. There may be
many young men come, one by one, if they mean
business, with a friend if it be merely a visit of
584 courtesy. And the girl will receive them all, and
431 will talk to them all; will laugh with a little
humorous knowledge of each man's peculiarities;
and she may give them cheroots, of her own making;

and, for one perhaps, for one, she will light the cheroot herself first, and thus kiss him by proxy.

And is the girl alone? Well, yes. To all intents and purposes she is alone; but there is always someone near, someone within call, for the veranda is free to all. She cannot tell who may come, and some men, as we know, are but wolves in sheep's clothing. Usually marriages are arranged by the parents. Girls are not very different here to elsewhere; they are very biddable, and ready to do what their mothers tell them, ready to believe that it is the best. And so if a lad comes wooing, and can gain the mother's ear, he can usually win the girl's affection, too; but I think there are more exceptions here than elsewhere. Girls are freer; they fall in love of their own accord oftener than elsewhere; they are very impulsive, full of passion. Love is a very serious matter, and they are not trained in self-restraint.

There are very many romances played out every day in the dusk beside the well, in the deep shadows of the palm-groves, in the luminous nights by the river shore—romances that end sometimes well, sometimes in terrible tragedies. For they are a very passionate people; the language is full of little love-songs, songs of a man to a girl, of a girl to a man. 'No girl,' a woman once told me, 'no good, quiet girl would tell a man she loved him first.' It may be so; if this be true, I fear there are many girls here who are not good and quiet. How many romances have I not seen in which the wooing began with the girl, with a little note perhaps, with a flower, with a message sent by someone whom she could

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180 THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE CH.

● 584 trust! Of course many of these turned out well. Parents are good to their children, and if they can, they will give their daughter the husband of her choice. They remember what youth is—nay, they themselves never grow old, I think; they never forget what once was to them now is to their children. So if it be possible all may yet go well. Social differences are not so great as with us, and the barrier is easily overcome. I have often known servants in a house marry the daughters, and be taken into the family; but, of course, sometimes
583 things do not go so smoothly. And then? Well, then there is usually an elopement, and a ten days' scandal; and sometimes, too, there is an elopement for no reason at all save that hot youth cannot abide the necessary delay.

For life is short, and though to-day be to us, who can tell for the morrow? During the full moon there is no night, only a change to silver light from golden; and the forest is full of delight. There are wood-cutters' huts in the ravines where the water falls, soft beds of torn bracken and fragrant grasses where great trees make a shelter from the heat; and for food, that is easily arranged. A basket of rice with a little salt-fish and spices is easily hidden in a favourable place. You only want a jar to cook it, and there is enough for two for a week; or it is brought day by day by some trusted friend to a place previously agreed upon.

All up and down the forest there are flowers for her hair, scarlet dak blossoms and orchid sprays and jasmine stars; and for occupation through the hours each has a new world to explore full of

They must have been in hiding close by, for it was early next morning that the boy came into my tent alone and very much abashed, and it was some little time before he could recover himself and talk freely as he would before, for he was greatly ashamed of himself.

But, after all, could he help it?

If you can imagine the tropic night, and the boy, full of high resolve, passing up the village street, now half asleep, and the girl, with shining eyes, coming to him out of the hibiscus shadows, and whispering in his ear words—words that I need not say—if you imagine all that, you will understand how it was that I lost my servant.

They both came to see me later on in the day after the marriage, and there was no bashfulness about either of them then. They came hand-in-hand, with the girl's father and mother and some friends, and she told me it was all her fault: she could not wait.

'Perhaps,' she said, with a little laugh and a side-glance at her husband—'perhaps, if he had gone with the thakin to Rangoon, he might have fallen in love with someone there and forgotten me; for I know they are very pretty, those Rangoon ladies, and of better manners than I, who am but a jungle girl.'

And when I asked her what it was like in the forest, she said it was the most beautiful place in all the world.

Things do not always go so well. Parents may be obdurate, and flight be impossible; or even her love may not be returned, and then terrible things

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184 THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE CH.

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762 happen. I have held, not once nor twice alone, inquests over the bodies, the fair, innocent bodies, of quite young girls who died for love. Only that, because their love was unreturned; and so the sore little heart turned in her trouble to the great river, and gave herself and her hot despair to the cold forgetfulness of its waters.

They love so greatly that they cannot face a world where love is not. All the country is full of the romance of love—of love passionate and great as woman has ever felt. It seems to me here that woman has something of the passions of man, not only the enduring affection of a woman, but the hot love and daring of a man. It is part of their heritage, perhaps, as a people in their youth. One sees so much of it, hears so much of it, here. I have seen a girl in man's attire killed in a surprise attack upon an insurgent camp. She had followed her outlawed lover there, and in the mêlée she caught up sword and gun to fight by his side, and was cut down through neck and shoulder; for no one could tell in the early dawn that it was a girl.

She died about an hour afterwards, and though I have seen many sorrowful things in many lands, in war and out of it, the memory of that dying girl, held up by one of the mounted police, sobbing out her life beneath the wild forest shadow, with no one of her sex, no one of her kin to help her, comes back to me as one of the saddest and strangest.

Her lover was killed in action some time later fighting against us, and he died as a brave man should, his face to his enemy. He played his game, he lost, and paid; but the girl?

I have seen and heard so much of this love of women and of its tragedies. Perhaps it is that to us it is usually the tragedies that are best remembered. Happiness is void of incident. And this love may be, after all, a good thing. But I do not know. Sometimes I think they would be happier if they could love less, if they could take love more quietly, more as a matter of course, as something that has to be gone through, as part of a life's training; not as a thing that swallows up all life and death and eternity in one passion.

In Burmese the love-songs are in a short, sweet rhythm, full of quaint conceits and word-music. I cannot put them into English verse, or give the flow of the originals in a translation. It always seems to me that Don Quixote was right when he said that a translation was like the wrong side of an embroidered cloth, giving the design without the beauty. But even in the plain, rough outline of a translation there is beauty here, I think:

From a Man to a Girl

The moon wooed the lotus in the night, the lotus was wooed by the moon, and my sweetheart is their child. The blossom opened in the night, and she came forth; the petals moved, and she was born.

She is more beautiful than any blossom; her face is as delicate as the dusk; her hair is as night falling over the hills; her skin is as bright as the diamond. She is very full of health, no sickness can come near her.

When the wind blows I am afraid, when the

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186 THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE CH. XIV

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breezes move I fear. I fear lest the south wind
take her, I tremble lest the breath of evening woo
her from me—so light is she, so graceful.

Her dress is of gold, even of silk and gold, and
her bracelets are of fine gold. She hath precious
stones in her ears, but her eyes, what jewels can
compare unto them?

She is proud, my mistress ; she is very proud, and
all men are afraid of her. She is so beautiful and
so proud that all men fear her.

In the whole world there is none anywhere that
can compare unto her.

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food and refreshment might be provided. After this the couple may put up either at the youth's home or the girl's home.

[178]
[185]

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In modern times there have been very few cases of people from the villages getting properly married. In the past there used to be many marriages through the agency of match-makers, but now most people elope. U Myaing estimates that only about two couples in a hundred get married first. Daw Aw Zar also eloped with U Myaing's father. (U Myaing was not very sure of this and so called out the question to Daw Aw Zar, who replied "Hae-mathi-bur-bu"; "Hae - I don't know.") U Myaing and Ma Aye Myaing eloped, not because her parents would have raised any objections, but because it had become the usual thing to do. Out of all the marriages contracted by members of U Myaing's extended family (over 60 families), only seven were conducted with proper rites and ceremonies. These were the wealthy members of the family who had their status to consider.

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U Myaing was in love with Ma Aye Myaing for a period extending two years prior to their elopement. He made a practice of visiting her house and of going with her to Pwee and entertainments, in the company of a large group of other people. Her parents never allowed her to go out alone with him. "That is the nature of parents - they will not allow that."

"Of course there were occasions when we met, just the two of us; but that was more through accident than design. For instance, I used to meet her on the village street. There are men who ask for assignations from girls, but they are men who do not have consideration for the sisters of other men. I am not one of those. When we were ready to elope, I told Ma Aye Myaing that I was coming for her on such and such a night. Some daughters respect this to their parents, "Mother, I am about to go along with him" and Ma Aye Myaing was one such. I also told my parents."

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On the appointed night, at about nine or ten o'clock, U Myaing collected nine or ten of the heads of the locality of help prevent any possible trouble on the part of the jealous suitors from the girl's village, made his way to Ma Aye Myaing's house and brought her along with him. An elopement is a joyous affair and U Myaing informs us that he used to often accompany friends when they went to elope with their girls. The girl is taken, either on foot, or by bullock cart if the distance is great, to the youth's village; and if they happen

BURMESE KINSHIP

449

mony, but in actual practice this often takes place as early as her seventh or eighth year. Since this is a feast occasion involving considerable expense to her family, there is a tendency to hold a single ceremony, at which perhaps a pubescent girl, together with her younger sisters or cousins, will all have their ears bored. On the same occasion male children of approximately the same age may be initiated into the Buddhist monkhood.⁵ 304 881

The girl initiate is dressed for the occasion in the traditional garb of the Burmese court, and in addition she wears a spired-helmet type of head dress. The villagers gather at her family's house for the event. An elderly woman rubs an anaesthetic plant substance on the girl's ear lobes and pierces them with gold pins. The pins are left in the ears, bent back. Later, if larger holes are desired, rolled leaves may be inserted. The family presents gifts to the assembled guests; often these are conventionalized tokens, such as inscribed cigars and fans. 292 278 431

Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the villages find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality in the company of others, at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others it is assumed that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as "getting married." The Burmese find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis: such behavior would be regarded as contrary to nature. However, unchaperoned association is disapproved and does not occur very frequently. 584 836

Once a pair have decided they wish to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, especially in the smaller villages, of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. In a small community the approach may be made directly by the boy's parents. In larger centers a female go-between is more likely to be employed. The boy's parents will be informed by the girl's family that the decision must await the outcome of consultation with an astrologer concerning the compatibility of the birth dates of the prospective bride and groom. If the marriage is found to be an auspicious one—which it will usually be found to be if the girl's parents desire the match—an affirmative answer will be relayed to the boy's parents. The latter will then call upon her parents and in the presence of elders, not necessarily related to either family, formally ask for the girl's hand. 584 787

⁵ Description of the boy's initiation ceremony is being reserved for a separate publication.

- 584 From this moment the couple are considered betrothed, and must not go about in public unchaperoned.

[787] The wedding date is astrologically determined. The length of the engagement period depends upon the availability of an auspicious wedding date. Generally speaking, lengthy engagements are disliked. In no case should an engagement carry over the Buddhist "Lent."

- 585 Before the wedding ceremony, the bride's house is open to friends and relatives, who are expected to drop in to help prepare the house for the wedding, lending household items that may be needed for the occasion. A pavilion adjoining the house is erected to accommodate the crowd that will attend. All the helpers and would-be helpers in this work are offered meals and light refreshments.

The bride's family normally bears all the expenses of these preparations, but sometimes the boy's family will mention a sum of money either as a contribution toward the wedding or as an indication of their son's ability to support a wife. If such funds are forthcoming, they will mention them at the time they ask for the girl's hand.

One room in the girl's house is set aside as the bridal chamber. In families of average or better financial means it is furnished with a bed, draperies, and complete toilet and dressing facilities. In poorer families that cannot afford to furnish the bridal chamber in elaborate fashion, some show of style will be made in furnishing the bed at least. By the evening before the wedding day the room must be ready, with all the wedding gifts on display.

On the wedding day three or four intimate married friends of the girl dress her. This must not be done by widows or divorcees, for it would bode ill for the marriage. For unmarried girls to perform this task would be immodest. Neither should a pregnant woman dress the bride, for this would be bad for her baby. The dressing of the bride begins sufficiently early for her to be ready at the astrologically-determined wedding hour.

The bridegroom's party arrives just prior to the appointed time for the ceremony. It includes two of his bachelor friends as well as his family. He takes his seat on a cushion on the platform that has been specially erected for the ceremony. The bride is brought out by her matrons, and approaches with her eyes downcast. She takes her seat on a cushion on the bridegroom's left. Across the platform, from left to right, are placed three silver offering bowls. A fourth bowl, on the right hand edge of the platform, contains puffed rice. The bride-

WEAVING

With the exception of the stuff for the

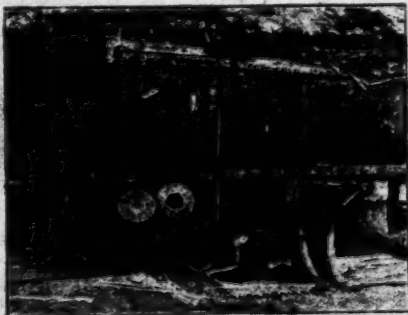
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126. BINDING THE THATCH.

beyond constructing the loom. Women spin and dye the yarn and weave the cloth. The lat of the loom (*lakka*) is of graceful outline—often elaborately carved—and is furnished with two ornamented metal pins, with loose metal rings, that jangle at each swing of the beam, and proclaim the industry of the young woman, to whom this business chiefly falls. Hence it comes that the loom is a favourite rendezvous. The same applies to other occupations of the girls, such as rice-cleaning, when the suitor will take a turn at the heavy part of the work and lounge while the sifting goes on. Common patterns of cloth are tartans, for which two or three shuttle-spools are required. The plainest cloth woven is at least shot with a colour different to that of the warp. The intricacy of a pattern is denoted by the number of spools. Scroll patterns (*cheik*) in silk are called *hau-ayd* (hundred-spool). The warp is a cubit wide and about twenty cubits long, which makes a man's loin-cloth (*paaf*). The piece is doubled and its edges sewn together along one side; the turn of the cloth serves as a bag or wallet, according as the piece is draped; it has no lining. The *paaf* is hitched round the loins and girt long or short, according to fancy, without the help of a belt; but elastic belts are now coming in. The slack is worn in a bunch in front (*haldangas*) or is thrown over the shoulder.

reclines' robes, cloth is not dyed in the piece, but in the yarn. Dyes used for cotton are also chiefly imported, but the indigenous dyes continue to be used for silk. The Burmans excel in yellows, oranges, deep reds, and rich deep greens, which they harmonise with beautiful effect. Their clear blues and purples are indifferent. Except in a few localities, where weaving is a speciality, the men take no share in the industry



127. PLATTING FLOOR-NETS (W. P. 66).

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COURTSHIP

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148. THE SUITOR'S VISIT.

work-boxes, loom-laths, mirror-stands are often the lover's handiwork. Not the least of the lover's offerings is poetry. If he be a scholar, he will sing or recite to his mistress verses of his own in praise of her charms. But there are current ditties to the fancy of every one. The imagery which is the main feature of these odes, is borrowed from every source of beauty, blossom and flower, dewdrop and pearl, planet and star. Burmese metre is largely eked out with euphonic particles; at other times

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the diction is so compressed as to make the sense most difficult for a foreigner to grasp.

Marriages of affection are general. Romantic attachments are frequent in real life, as they are the rule in the play. The frequency of the mere marriage of convenience is not greater in Burma than in England or America. In this respect there is no parallel to the customs of the hill-tribes of Burma, the neighbouring Asiatic civilisations or even the Latin races of Europe. Their mutual qualities, physical, moral, and material, are for the most part known to the parties from childhood. Burmans evince an openness and frankness amounting to joviality, not to be met with in other parts of Asia. They indulge a much freer play of feature and yet greater freedom in the modulation of the voice. The term for betrothal—*sayda-pe*, earnest-money—testifies to the original purchase of the bride. In modern usage, however, the *sayda* is merely a share of the cost of outfit, according to means. It takes the form of a silk *stamin* or a piece of jewellery for the girl, and is brought by the lad when he comes with his parents to ask the consent of the girl's parents to the marriage. Where parents oppose, runaway matches are frequent.

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149. MARRIAGE CEREMONY.

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131. THE IDEAL AND THE REAL.

They are generally condoned. Burmans do not wait to make money in order to marry, but marry in order to make money. Girls marry from the age of about twenty, and men about twenty-five. The marriage is a quiet affair. A day is fixed, when the lad and his parents repair to the home of the girl, whither some of the elders of the village (*lidyis*) have been invited for witness. The father of the lad addresses the parents of the girl in this wise: "Seeing that our children love each other, we pray you let your daughter be as our daughter and our son as your son" (*ekkan*). The girl's parents express their pleasure and approval, and according to one usage, the couple thereupon join hands (*lettat*), which means marriage; but the joining-of-hands is as a rule figurative. After this the lad goes and fetches his bedding, curtain, and clothes and places them in the house in token of reception into the family. In conclusion, the

parties and the witnesses eat pickled tea together. When one or both parties are strangers in the place, friends undertake the part of parents and the elders make inquiries as to blood-relationship and pre-existing ties. Kinship closer than first-cousin and the corresponding step-relationships are respected—except by royalty (p. 170). Sometimes marriages are of a more festive description

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(*mingala*). Astrologers are

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called in and company entertained as at the *nabank mingala*. Other unions, again, are by mere mutual agreement, without formalities of any kind. By time-

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honoured custom the lads of the village claim the right to pelt the house of the new-married pair at night (*ge-pyit*), and it is usual to buy them off. New couples mostly start life in

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132. TATTOOING (TOSWIN, see p. 13).

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principle of contributory negligence was also known to Bur- 672
mese law, and the following rules of law regarding "travelling 683
at night with due caution" will serve as an illustration:

If there be occasion for a person at night to go about the city or the town, or the village, he shall go only with a lantern, for if he goes about without a lantern and is stopped, or hindered, or attacked, he shall not be entitled to damages. If, however, he is going about in search of a doctor, and if he shouts out this fact in the darkness, he shall be entitled to full compensation from the offender who stops or strikes him, even though he carries no lantern. In the same way, if a young woman goes about at night beyond the usual hours when people go about, and if she wears no kerchief on her breast, and if her modesty is outraged, she shall not be entitled to any damages.

The unity of Burmese society has always been the family, 671
but unlike the rigidly knit Roman family or the Hindu joint 693
family, it easily disintegrates. A Burmese family is loosely knit by ties of blood, and sometimes of marriage, and thus it usually consists of the father, the mother, and their unmarried sons and daughters. The sons however can leave the family even before marriage on attaining the age of puberty (sixteen years of age), and the daughters on attaining the age of majority, but sons and daughters of course usually leave the family only on marriage. Sometimes sons and daughters decide to remain in the family even after marriage, at least for some time. The head of the family is the father, and on his death, the mother succeeds to the headship of the family, as in Burmese law the husband and wife are heirs to each other. The head of the Burmese family exercises general control over the family, but unlike the heads of the Roman and Hindu families, he performs no religious duties. He or she has the right to betroth his or her daughter under the age of majority to a male of his or her choice, but the right is subject to the daughter's right of repudiating the betrothal, either by refusing to marry the man chosen by her parent, or by compelling the parent to recognize her betrothal to the man of her own choice. [584] ●